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By-Gump, Larney R., Jr.

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ABSTRACT

Counselor self-understanding as a vital factor in counseling is universally supported in the literature and by professional organization. However, several practicing school counselors stated that they did not relate their self-understanding to their work as counselors. The purpose of this study was to determine the reliability of classifying counselors as Sophisticated or Naive with respect to self-awareness, and to obtain counselor and client ratings of effectiveness. The polarization model of so classifying counselors is not complete; a continuum model might be more reliable. Clients of Naive Counselors rated their counselors higher in counseling effectiveness than did clients of Sophisticated Counselors.

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Sophistication in Counselor Self-Understanding and Perceived Effectiveness[1]

Larney R. Gump, Jr.[2]
University of Maryland

Counselor self-understanding as an important factor in counseling has been supported by writers of diverse theoretical orientations (Arbuckle, 1966; Krumboltz, 1966; Rogers, 1961; Tyler, 1961; Williamson, 1966). It has been recognized by professional counseling associations as a vital aspect of counselor education and competency (APA, 1954; APGA, 1965).

A fundamental similarity of rationales advanced for the importance of counselor self-understanding is to prevent--or at least limit--the counselor from unknowingly influencing the client. The counselor who is not aware of or unable to control his biases "...tends to interpret an interviewee's remark in keeping with these prejudices" (Warters, 1964, p. 423). Only through self-understanding is it possible for the counselor to prevent the projection of his needs and, therefore, the subtle exploitation of the client (Appell, 1963; Bonney and Gazda, 1965). The counselor's own attitudes may be reflected in his counseling, and unless he is aware of them, he will not penetrate the client's perceptual field (Boy and Pine, 1963).

Trait-factor approaches in the study of personal characteristics for effective counselors have not been productive (Allen, 1967). Researchers have not been able to ascertain a personality type or personality profile which is uniquely well suited for counseling.

No one personality type is best suited, since individuals with dissimilar personalities appear to be equally competent counselors (Allen, 1967; Tyler, 1961). Effective counselors may be the ones who have learned to use their "...unique self as an instrument for working with other people" (Combs and Soper, 1963, p. 222).

Glenn (1966) categorized counselors into two groups according to whether or not they stated in an interview that they related their self-understanding to their work as a counselor. Self-understanding is defined as awareness of one's motivations, needs, attitudes, values, and characteristic ways of perceiving.

Glenn's results, i.e., the dicotomization of counselors, might be attributed to various factors, e.g. familarization with self-understanding literature, self-assurance or doubt, egotism or modesty, counselor-researcher interaction. As operational definitions, counselors who stated that they related their self-understanding to their work are referred to as Sohpisticated Counselors (SC): counselors who did not state that they related their self-understanding to their work are referred to as Naive Counselors (NC).

The present investigation was designed to (1) determine the reliability of classifying counselors as either sophisticated or naive, and (2) determine if there are differences in client and counselor perceptions of counselor effectiveness of sophisticated and naive counselors. To investigate the second problem, perceptions of counselor effectiveness were compared between: (2.1) clients of SC (CL-SC), and clients of NC (CL-NC); (2.2) NC and their clients; (2.3) SC and NC; and (2.4) SC and their clients.

Procedure

Sample

Forty of an available 46 (86.9%) counselors who participated in Glenn's (1966) study comprise the counselor sample. These 40 counselors are located throughout the public secondary school of Pennsylvania. In selecting her sample, Glenn employed a stratified random sample of all counselors (N=1600) in the public schools of Pennsylvania during the 1965-66 school year.

The client sample (N=499) utilized in this study represented a random selection of students from the population comprising the counselors' assigned case load. Fifteen students were chosen (by random numbers) for each counselor. Because of absenteeism or not having been interviewed by the counselor, the mean client sample per counselor was 12.5

Instruments

Two instruments, each with a client and counselor edition, were employed: Counseling Evaluation Inventory (CEI), (Linden, Stone, and Shertzer, 1965) and the Counselor Performance Scale (CPS), (Gump, 1967). The CEI consists of 21 items and yields four ratings: Counseling Climate (X), Counselor Comfort (Y), Client Satisfaction (Z), and Total Rating (T). The CPS consists of 62 items and yields a total rating.

Each item of the CEI and CPS was also written from the counselor's point of view, so the instruments could be used for counselor self-evaluation.

Method of Administration

To determine the reliability fo classifying counselors as either

SC or NC, counselors were interviewed, thus replicating portions of the interview phase of Glenn's (1966) study. The criterion for determining category assignments for counselors was whether or not counselors indicated that they related their self-understanding to their work as counselors.

Counselors evaluated themselves on the CPS for Counselors and CEI for Counselors and were evaluated by a random sample of their counselees on the CPS and CEI.

Analysis of Data

Coefficients of correlation were computed for the two independent categorizations of counselors, and one-way analysis of variance was used for testing sample group difference on the five instrument variables according to the second problem.

Results

A correlation of .55 was obtained for the two independent investigators on the classification of 40 counselors as SC (N=14), or NC (N=17) (i.e., 77% agreement). Counselors (N=9) on whom the investigators disagreed regarding category assignments were treated as a separate category for the analysis of data--Uncategorizable Counselors (UC). This created five ex post facto consideration for problem two: (2.5) CL-SC and clients of UC (CL-UC); (2.6) CL-NC and CL-UC; (2.7) UC and their clients; (2.8) SC and UC; and (2.9) NC and UC.

Table 1 summarized the F ratios for perceptions of counselor effectiveness by counselors and clients as presented in problem two (including ex post facto considerations). Significant differences did not occur in six of the nine sample group comparisons. Refer to

Table 2 for mean ratings by counselors and clients.

Insert Table 1 about here

CL-SC rated their counselors lower on all variables than CL-NC rated their counselors. Significant differences were obtained on variables CPS and CEI X ($p. < .05$); CEI Y, Z, and T ($p. < .01$). Ratings by SC were lower on all variables than were ratings by NC. Significant differences occurred in variables CEI Y ($p. < .01$) and CEI T ($p. < .05$). CL-UC rated their counselors significantly lower ($p. < .01$) on all variables than CL-NC rated their counselors.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

It appears that information obtained in this study provides some basis to believe that counselors may be conceptualized as individuals with various degrees of sophistication in their perceptual utilization of self-understanding in counseling. A continuum model might be more effective in establishing a classification system for counselors' statements regarding self-understanding in counseling than the polarization model used in this study.

Discrepancies in classifying counselors by the investigators may be due to changes in counselors during the interval of the two studies, the reliability of the classification procedure, and the personality of the investigators.

In light of the overwhelming support found in the literature of the importance and need for counselors to understand themselves, one

might expect counselors who have stated that they relate their self-understanding to their work to be more effective than those who did not so state. Consequently, some of the results are quite surprising.

Clients rated SC significantly higher than NC. How can these unexpected results be accounted for? An obvious possibility, though difficult to accept, is that NC are more effective than SC.

Without being aware of it, NC may be imposing upon clients their motivations, needs, attitudes, values, and characteristic ways of perceiving; whereas SC may not be imposing upon clients their motivations, needs, attitudes, values and characteristic ways of perceiving. Might clients perceive an imposing counselor (NC) to be more honest, more direct, and more helpufl--even though the idea is in opposition to what most writers state?

Another explanation (one more likely accepted) is that NC may function more closely to the clients' perception of the role and responsibility of the counselor. Grant (1954) and Jenson (1955) found that high school students perceived their counselors as being more helpful with educational and vocational problems but preferred to seek assistance from others for personal and emotional difficulties. Might it be true that NC become involved to a greater extent than SC in guidance functions as opposed to counseling per se? That is, NC might do very little counseling (i.e., face-to-face interviewing) but become involved in more guidance activities; e.g., dissmeination of occupational, vocational, and educational information, schedule-making, advising, organizing student activities, assisting students with job and college applications, and other non-counseling activities. If in fact this is the case, then it is not surprising that clients of NC rated such counselors significantly higher than clients of SC rated

their counselors.

Although it was not the intent of this study to so classify counselors, there might be a possiblity that SC are more client-centered while NC are more directive. In a study conducted by Sonne and Goldman (1957), a large majority of high school seniors preferred directive to client-centered counseling. Krueger (1965) stated that "...highly client-centered, unstructured approach...might create havoc in the public relations aspect of the counseling program..." (p. 984).

In conducting a study involving self-reports, one runs the risk of not obtaining valid information. Since the criteria of this study are ones of self-reporting, it has been assumed that the participants are equally perceptive and truthful in their responses. This has been accounted for in the client sample by random selection, and in the counselor sample through the comparison of two independent studies involving the same sample. However, it is possible that counselor verbal self-reports during an interview regarding the use of their self-understanding in counseling, though reliable, may not be valid. It is possible that one cannot adequately assess (and verbalize) whether or not he actually does relate his self-understanding to his counseling. If this were true, then the dichotomizing of counselors as SC or NC would be invalid and the category assignments would result by chance alone. It would, therefore, be expected that there would be no significant differences in the ratings of counselor effectiveness by clients of SC and NC. Since significant differences were found, however, it appears that one can categorize counselors into groups based on their statements of whether or not they relate

their self-understanding to their counseling.

The fact that SC are more critical of their effectiveness than UC and NC, and that UC are more critical than NC may be due to the fact that SC (and to a certain extent, UC) are more consciously aware of their relationship with clients and are more constantly evaluating their behavior in an attempt to increase their effectiveness.

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Footnote

[1]This article is based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of George R. Hudson.

[2]Larney R. Gump, D. Ed., Counselor and Assistant Professor of Counseling and Personnel Services, Counseling Center, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

Table 1

F Tests of Significance for Ratings of Counselors

by Counselors and Their Clients

Problem No.	Subject	COUNSELING EVALUATION INVENTORIES Counseling Climate (X)	Counselor Comfort (Y)	Client Satisfaction (Z)	Total (T)	Counselor Performance Scales
2.1	CL-SC : CL-NC	4.51*	8.46**	8.02**	9.28**	4.33*
2.2	NC : CL-NC	.09	.02	1.31	.33	.01
2.3	SC : NC	2.56	7.93**	2.50	6.97*	1.35
2.4	SC : CL-SC	1.39	1.19	.70	.44	.07
2.5	CL-SC : CL-UC	2.95	.30	.43	1.61	1.86
2.6	CL-NC : CL-UC	11.26**	10.78**	9.23**	14.21**	9.54**
2.7	UC : CL-UC	.56	.05	1.24	.44	.60
2.8	SC : UC	2.62	.33	.11	1.01	.63
2.9	NC : UC	.01	2.46	.90	1.22	.01

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

Table 2

Means for Ratings of Counselors by Counselors

and Their Clients

Sample	Number	COUNSELING EVALUATION INVENTORIES Counseling Climate (X)	Counselor Comfort (Y)	Client Satisfaction (Z)	Total (T)	Counselor Performance Scales
SC	14	27.6	13.4	20.4	61.4	92.2
NC	17	30.1	16.1	22.1	68.8	96.6
UC	9	30.0	14.1	20.9	65.0	96.2
CL-SC	175	29.3	14.8	19.4	63.6	93.4
CL-NC	212	30.6	15.9	20.7	67.2	96.9
CL-UC	112	28.0	14.5	19.1	61.5	90.2